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AUTHOR Jadin, Tom
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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of "burn-out" is most frequently experienced by people who, in the course of their jobs, work with other people such as students, patients, or clients in situations that involve intense personal interaction. The complex symptoms of the burn-out syndrome are described in this paper. The most common of these symptoms is a change of attitude toward work and other people, stress-induced physical problems, and a sense of isolation. In a discussion of the causes of burn-out, it is suggested that while the major factor of this syndrome is the individual's inner emotions and reactions, the atmosphere of the work place and attitudes of supervisors and co-workers are contributing elements. Techniques for coping with burn-out and preventing it are discussed. (JD)

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Tom Jadin
Director of Substance Abuse Services
Winnebago Mental Health Institute
Box H
Winnebago, Wisconsin 54985

SP 017 131

STAFF BURN-OUT

What Is It, What Causes It, And What Can One Do About It?

Burn-out /'barn-'aut/ n: physical and/or emotional exhaustion caused by excessive demands upon energy, emotions, or resources. It is a syndrome experienced by people meeting two criteria. First, they are people who, in the course of their everyday jobs, work with "other people". These other people may be defined as patients, clients, customers, students, etc. Second, they are people whose contacts with these other people can be of a crisis, emergency, or "sticky situation" nature. The more frequent these latter types of contacts occur, the higher the incidence of Burn-out.

If then an individual finds himself meeting these two criteria, it is no longer a question of if he will experience some feelings of Burn-out, but now merely a question of when. Symptoms of Burn-out seem inevitable when these two conditions exist.

Symptoms of Staff Burn-Out

Since Burn-out is a syndrome, there are no single symptoms which lead one to "diagnose" it. Instead, it is the pattern of behavior that an individual develops on the job which needs examining. These job habits seen together as a "work style" is the key to deciding whether oneself, a co-worker, or an employee is experiencing Burn-out.

One common symptom is a changing of attitude. The talkative person becomes silent, the outgoing person becomes withdrawn, the life of the party no longer comes to parties, and the easy-going person becomes irritable and touchy. One's place of employment no longer becomes a place that is fun to work in. It becomes necessary now for people to watch their step, think out what they are going to say before they say it, and not be as free, easy going, and relaxed as they once were.

The most common attitudinal change is the development of a cynical and negative attitude. This cynicism and negativism shows itself not in a constructive, specific way, but in general and displaced behaviors. It seems these people are "bitching for the sake of bitching". Occasionally this deteriorates to a point where people become paranoid and suspicious about changes, new personnel, ulterior motives, new mandates, etc.

All these attitudinal changes within the individual affect the general tone of the work unit.

The most common reaction of a person experiencing Burn-out is an attempt to "get out". Experiencing Burn-out is not enjoyable. Individuals can become laden with guilt, panic, fear, and anxiety as they feel themselves experiencing and demonstrating behaviors they were not aware of before. Frequently the individual attempts to flee this unpleasant situation. The ultimate way of getting out is suicide. While this may seem a bit drastic, it is nevertheless the case that

those occupations working with people on a consistent emergency and crisis basis experience disproportionately large numbers of suicides. For example, it has been estimated that four times as many police officers die at the hands of their own gun as do by someone else's.

Fortunately, most attempts at getting out are not this drastic. People may leave their job, change responsibilities, go back to graduate school, become a supervisor, open up a branch office, become a grant writer, come to work late, or any other of a host of "getting out" behaviors. In general, the individual begins to realize that it is those other people who are burning him out. As a consequence, he begins to do anything he can to get away from them.

An increase in the use of sick time can often be a symptom of Burn-out. It may be a "getting out" type of behavior. In this instance the use of sick time is a way of legitimatizing absenteeism. Often, however, real physical illnesses develop as people burn out. Although illnesses can be classified as psychosomatic, because they are "in the head", it does not mean that they hurt any less or are unreal. People may complain about headaches which do not seem to go away, back and neck tension, ulcers, indigestion, loss of sleep, shortness of breath, loss of weight, colds they cannot shake, and feeling physically run down.

Additionally people who burn out may exhibit a number of stress-induced physical problems including nervous tics, appetite variations, increased smoking, sleep disturbances, increased sweating, stuttering, slurred speech, speech impediments, nausea, stomach aches, stomach cramps, grinding teeth, dizziness, low grade infections, rashes, acne, crying, constipation, diarrhea, frigidity, impotence, loss of sex drive, high blood pressure, dry mouth, dry throat, irritability, bad temper, lethargy, cold clammy hands, sudden bursts of energy, finger tapping, toe tapping, pencil tapping, depression, fear, panic, hives, coughing, excessive snacking, nagging, fatigue, pacing, and restlessness.

Another symptom is the increased use of drugs or alcohol. Whether this increase is due to the individual's feeling guilty about not producing to his potential, or about experiencing and feeling some of the emotions he has toward job and clients, and, as a result, attempts to kill the guilt through drugs or alcohol; or, whether it is an attempt to self-medicate to "feel more relaxed" in order to do a better job, an increased use of substances often accompanies Burn-out.

As people experience Burn-out, panic feelings set in. Individuals find that they have finally attained a job which they strived for and now realize they are not performing that job well. People feel that the problems they are experiencing with Burn-out are unique only to them. They feel that Burn-out is an indication of something wrong with them personally. Consequently, it is not uncommon for people to seek outside help and/or therapy. Individuals seek help from the Employee Assistance program, a therapist, their pastor, or any other area they feel can give them answers as to what is happening to them.

One attempt at seeking outside help which often meets with disaster is the individual's entrance into a weekend encounter group or marathon type experience. Such experiences are tremendously draining upon emotions, often are intensely self-examining, contain fair amounts of peer pressure, confrontations, and

scrutiny, and are exactly the opposite of what a person experiencing Burn-out needs. As the individual experiences the panic and the self-doubt of Burn-out he needs understanding, comfort, support, building up, and love.

Another phenomenon of Burn-out is the isolation of the individual and the coinciding friction among co-workers. This development of isolation and friction is a bit of the chicken and the egg question. As the person detaches himself from others, the isolation leads to a breakdown in communication and, consequently, friction develops. On the other hand, it may be the case that the individual precipitates some friction among co-workers. In that way, because he does not get along with co-workers, they tend to leave him alone (which is exactly what he wants!). Whatever the reason, the detachment of self from others and the ensuing friction among co-workers, manifested in petty arguments, back biting, back stabbing, gossiping, etc., is a common indication of some Burn-out problems.

This pattern of isolation and friction follows the individual home. As the individual experiences Burn-out at work, and its resulting pressures, self-guilt, panic, etc., he is less able/willing to take on the pressures of home. He becomes intolerant, unwilling to assume normal responsibilities, less willing to become emotionally invested, and begins to detach and isolate himself from children and spouse. The result is a deteriorating home situation showing itself in increasing conflicts among the family, a deteriorating husband/wife relationship, children no longer bringing friends home, etc.

In the latter stages of Burn-out this detachment, isolation, and friction grows to a point where an individual attempts to detch and isolate from all other people. He/she detaches from clients, co-workers, supervisors, family, and friends to the point where he/she can be portrayed as the little skinny person sitting alone in a box muttering "people are no damn good".

It has been alleged that Staff Burn-out is nothing more than depression. While there is no doubt that depression plays a good part in the Staff Burn-out process, it is only a part. It is not the "blahs", post-Xmas depression, or cabin fever. It is really much more than that. Some persons experiencing Staff Burn-out do not become depressed, but instead, become aggressive, portraying themselves as a rebel on the staff. In other instances the person may over-compensate by adopting an omnipotent false bravado in which he attempts to portray himself as the competent, "super employee". This individual volunteers for extra duties, takes on the difficult cases, and often pulls very foolish, risky behaviors. Therefore, it cannot be said that depression alone defines Staff Burn-out.

The opposite reactions to Staff-Burnout as portrayed above --depression vs. aggression--illustrates the work habit theory of Burn-out alluded to in the beginning of this paper. Individuals react to Staff Burn-out in much the same way as they react to other frustrations. Some become depressed, withdrawn, apathetic, etc., while others become aggressive, hostile, and rebellious. Neither behavior is better, but is simply a reflection of that individual's coping pattern. The symptoms of Burn-out, then, are the unsuccessful set of coping patterns individuals use to deal with the two prerequisite conditions mentioned at the onset.

Both a symptom and a cause of Burn-out is an individual's experience of reality shock. There are two types of reality shock. The first is best defined by the old cliche", "Mother never told me there'd be days like this". This form of reality shock is experienced soon in an employee's career. The employee realizes that the work is different from what he expected. He finds himself not trained for the duties he is asked to perform, or that he is dealing with aspects of the job he never knew existed. There is disillusionment, disappointment, and a rather rude awakening as the employee realizes exactly what he has gotten into. Such reality shock occurs each time a person takes on a different job or job role. The individual develops ways to cope with the disillusionment, and, too frequently, these methods consist of many Burn-out behaviors.

A second type of reality shock occurs with employees after about one year's job experience. At that point an employee begins to realize that "there's no way I can win". The employee realizes that he is being submitted to three distinct sets of job expectations. First, there are the expectations, demands, and roles which are set upon him from the administrators and directors of the agency. Second, there are expectations, demands, and roles expected of him from the other people for whom the individual provides service. Finally, there are expectations, roles, and demands which an individual places upon himself when choosing a job. These demands relate to the personality needs which lead one to choose a particular vocation. For example, some individuals choose a job as part of a self-fulfilling ego trip. Others choose it for reasons of self-grandisement, self-sacrificing, dedication to others, or an attempt to deny one's own problem. The individual brings to a job his own particular set of expectations, hopes, and self-demands. At the end of the first year of employment the individual realizes that these three distinct sets of expectations exist and that there appears to be no way in which the individual can meet all successfully, i.e., do what is expected from supervisors, clients, and from self.

During the second, third, and fourth years of his career, the individual adopts work habits which will allow him to deal with this conflict. By the end of Year 4 the individual has either successfully coped with this dilemma and is leading a productive work career, or has burned out.

Because a person has been on a job longer than five years, however, does not mean that that person has successfully dealt with Burn-out. There are too many examples of people who have been on their jobs for ten years and yet have been burned out for five of those ten years. These are people whose work performance is at a minimum, are very rigid, compulsive, "by the book" individuals who really put out very little, and, more accurately, come to work and just "hang around".

An individual shows signs of Burn-out as he suppresses thinking of clients. Individuals complain about a barrage of agency, facility or supervisory factors which, while playing a part in the Burn-out process, seem to encourage the individual's denying that one of the prime sources for his frustration is the other people he must deal with in his daily work. In addition, as the individuals begin to be burdened with the various dilemmas, behaviors, panics, fears, and anxieties of the Burn-out process, they become too involved in their own problems to be able to invest themselves in the problems of the people with whom they must work.

Consequently, one begins to see a supressed thinking of clients manifesting itself in individuals' spending less time with clients. The questions they ask are not as probing for, if they find a problem, it means they must then deal with it and they no longer have the energy to do so. Individual sessions are not as intense, they offer fewer alternatives to clients, and are less willing to extend themselves to clients. Individuals are tempted to tell the client their story rather than listen to the client's story. Eventually the individual becomes rigid, closed to input, and inflexible, as change is threatening now to the individual. Exhausted, the person seems to say, "I don't want to have to care anymore". They cannot empathize any longer. As one counselor told me, "I don't want to feel happy with them, sad with them, cry with them, be angry at them. I can't anymore, I just can't".

While suppressed thinking of clients illustrates the individual's attempt to withdraw from people causing excessive demands upon him, it also illustrates the tremendous panic and fear experienced by individuals as they begin the Burn-out process. To always envision oneself as doing a particular type of work, to study hard in order to gain the necessary skills and then compete to finally achieve that job, only to have to admit to oneself and others shortly thereafter that "I cannot do it anymore" is a shocking, brutally humiliating, and panic filled blow to one's ego.

Often an individual's attempt to cope with Burn-out becomes symptoms of it. An example is the spill-over of work to home. Whether due to guilt, or unproductivity, individuals often feel they need to do extra work to prove their worth. They may put in extra hours, volunteer for overtime, and also take work home with them. Frequently, the spill-over of work to home is hidden in more innocent behaviors. Individuals may socialize with the same people with whom they work. Their conversation is often about work, and the line between work and home becomes very thin. Others may devote much of their free time to work-related activities. They may take courses related to their work, or do volunteer work similar to their work. Such behaviors, while often rewarded by supervisors and agency administrations, may lead to Burn-out as individuals begin to over-identify with their work role. Such individuals gain all of their self-worth from what they are able to "do". This "I am what I do" philosophy is a Catch-22. If the individual can no longer do well on the job, he is less of a person, more of a failure. Individuals who do not have a life separate from work often fall into the trap of over-identifying with the work role. They are unable to enjoy free time away from work, return to work during their free time or vacation "just to see how things are going", and frequently adopt attitudes of "an attack on my agency is an attack on me personally".

Finally, individuals experiencing Burn-out who are unable to feel good about what they are doing often try to gain feelings of self-worth by how much they are able to do. They play a numbers game by compiling statistics, charts, and graphs to prove to themselves and the administration that they are still functioning well. These persons volunteer for the large case loads, the difficult cases, the extra case loads, while hoping that quantity can make up for quality. Unfortunately, this behavior simply adds to Burn-out. The more the individual does, the more he does poorly. The more he does poorly, the more guilty he feels, and so the more work he does. This snowballing cycle perpetuates the Burn-out process.

Causes of Staff Burn-out

One critical place to begin determining the causes for many Burn-out behaviors is with the administrative/supervisory attitude toward it. Too often this attitude consists of a conspiracy of silence. As an employee demonstrates some symptoms of Burn-out and even shares these with a supervisor, he is met with verbal or non-verbal messages consisting of, "What's the matter? Can't you take it?", or "Pull yourself together and get back in there", or perhaps even, "I went through mine--now you go through yours". Such attitudes offer no sympathy, no empathy, no understanding, no acknowledgment that Staff Burn-out exists. As a result, the individual is left with the feeling that what he or she is experiencing is a personal unique problem for clearly the supervisor does not even understand what the individual is trying to share with him.

There is little doubt that an individual's co-workers also contribute to the Burn-out problem. In many ways their contribution to the problem is the same as that of supervision/administration. Frequently co-workers are reluctant to admit to feelings of stress, anxiety, panic, and non-productivity. Instead, as an individual experiences Burn-out, he looks at co-workers who, from all outward appearances, seem to be functioning smoothly. Consequently, the individual assumes that, if he does not get himself together, he might risk losing his job. So he puts on a false front of self-assurance and competence. As others in the agency begin to experience Burn-out feelings, they too see only well put together individuals handling their job well. It is not unusual then to have an entire agency of people who are functioning with false fronts--burned out--but unwilling to share it or admit it. The result is another phenomenon--Agency Burn-out.

This conspiracy of silence from co-workers is fostered from feelings of competition within the work unit which lead people to believe that many of the Burn-out behaviors mean they are "unprofessional", less competent, less of a man, "can't take the heat", etc.

A lack of preparation in several key areas also contributes to the Staff Burn-out process. First, individuals are rarely prepared adequately for the job they are expected to perform. When new changes, new forms, new methodology, or new processes are introduced into a job setting, rarely are employees trained to adequately cope with and perform these new duties. Often individuals are promoted to jobs of more responsibility with little or no training to accompany that promotion. As a result, individuals find themselves on jobs which they are really little prepared for, and they begin to adopt many of the rigid, compulsive, "by the book" behaviors trying desperately to maintain control of their situation.

In addition, few workers are prepared for Staff Burn-out itself. Few, in their training, are prepared for the fact that Burn-out will occur. As a consequence, when they begin to experience some of the Burn-out feelings and behaviors, there is a panic as they wonder what is happening to them. Were individuals informed that such a thing exists and made aware of the symptoms of it, this panic could be turned into recognition and coping.

Individuals are seldom prepared for working closely and deeply with people. Few workers are adequately prepared to work in crisis, emergency, and sticky situation areas mentioned previously. Yet, it is those situations which drain the most energy from individuals as they ruminate over and over about the circumstances, rehearse what they could have or should have said, and find themselves thinking about it even when away from their work situation. Without a preparation for working closely and deeply with people, individuals, after experiencing a few critical situations, tend to back off, not question as intently, and take on many Burn-out behaviors.

High case loads are also a contributor to Burn-out. Forcing people to deal with a large number of people in a short amount of time forces them to adopt many Burn-out behaviors. It forces people to become more dehumanizing, more "by the book", more routineish, less likely to invest themselves in clients, having less time to spend with clients, etc.

Finally, there is a public attitude concerning those who work in the helping professions which also causes some of the Burn-out problem. There exists among the general public the idea that helping people are somehow inherently stronger, healthier, more well put together. Such attitudes are expressed by comments like, "That job must take a special person", or "That must take a lot of patience", or "That must be a rewarding place to work". Too often individuals working in those helping professions accept such roles and stereotypes as flattery and compliments. A danger lies hidden in such role expectations, however, because people who are stronger, healthier, and more well put together are also the kind of people who never need time outs, need not look after their own mental health, and in general can cope with any problem without losing stride. Surely, for example, this individual would not have a personal problem for after all he is a counselor himself. This kind of attitude puts the helping person in the position where he can only lose. Even if it were possible to work hard, struggle, and eventually become that healthier, stronger, more well put together super person, there still would be no reward for the individual would then only be doing what he was supposed to have been doing from the outset.

Suggestions for Help

Any discussion concerning remedies for Staff Burn-out needs to bear in mind two factors. First, Staff Burn-out is a process, a destructive set of job habits, and consequently no one-shot remedy will be effective. Too often individuals attempt to use a few days off or a vacation as an attempt to deal with Staff Burn-out only to find that they return to work now Rested and Burned-out instead of Exhausted and Burned-out. Successfully dealing with Staff Burn-out means changing one's own work habits and frequently part of one's life style. Staff Burn-out is a process which one is never finished combating; the adoption of a new constructive set of work habits is required to deal with it.

A second factor is the point that Staff Burn-out has two sides to its coin: 1) an organizational side, and 2) a personal side. There is no doubt that many organizational factors including bureaucracy, environment, lack of compensation, reorganizations etc. add to, and in some cases cause, Staff Burn-out. On the other hand, much of what the individual does or does not do contributes to and even causes his own Burn-out. As people experience Burn-out it is too easy for

them to point the finger of blame at the obvious organizational and agency deficiencies. Yet, research indicates that at least 60% of the Staff Burn-out problem is caused by the personal side of the coin, not the organizational. Consequently, what one does or does not do personally has more to say about whether he can successfully cope with Staff Burn-out, than what the organization or agency does or does not do.

In addition, individuals are in much more control of their own life style and habits than they are of the various organizational deficiencies and hassles. The personal side is more likely something they can do something about than is the organizational side. It is therefore critical that while the organizational side is not overlooked, individuals need to, as the old prayer says, "Have the serenity to accept those things I cannot change, the courage to change those things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference". Clearly, the first aspect in dealing with Staff Burn-out is the ability to distinguish between those causes of Burn-out which can be dealt with by the individual and those which cannot.

One method helpful in dealing with Burn-out is adopting an attitude called "detached concern". Such an attitude toward the other people with whom one deals connotes empathy without sympathy and is a desired frame of mind when working closely and deeply with others. It connotes the ability to be involved and concerned in others problems without over-involvement. The helping person needs simply to gain an appreciation of what the other person is experiencing. Without the ability to maintain a degree of objectivity and a willingness to detach oneself from the other's problems, concern and involvement often become causes for Burn-out. Frequently, when individuals begin their employment, they have too much concern and involvement. After they have "been around a while", detachment, rather than concern, epitomizes their attitude. The ability to combine both is the key in coping with Staff Burn-out.

Persons working in the helping professions must know what Burn-out is and expect it. Expecting the inevitable eliminates much of the panic when that inevitable finally occurs. Employees, by knowing the symptoms and preparing themselves, can better cope.

To the extent that an individual can maintain genuineness, the better he can deal with Staff Burn-out. Frequently, individuals who suffer from Burn-out are those who must wear uniforms, either physical or emotional, which force them to be something that they are not. They are forced to be a "hard guy", or a "nice guy", and they are simply not that type of person. As a result they find themselves having to fake it by changing appearance, speech, mannerisms, and forcing themselves to adopt phony behaviors, many of which mimic the symptoms of Burn-out. Individuals need to be able to feel free to do their job in their own inimitable fashion and style.

Separating work from home is one of the greatest aids in dealing with Burn-out. There are a number of ways to effect this separation. The most obvious is cut down on the extra work, stop taking work home, not volunteer for extra assignments. Other ways of separating work from home include paying attention to the types of activities conducted during free hours. Often individuals

"burn the candle at both ends" by doing similar tasks after work to those done at work. An individual may do volunteer work which, in essence, is the very same kind of work the person does on the job.

Certain professions, such as nursing, have the pitfall of burning candles at both ends built in. These women and men as part of their job are expected to be nurturing, organizing, taking care of, mothering kinds of persons. Yet when these people return home, they may change their clothes, but then go right back to adopting mothering, nurturing, organizing, taking care of kinds of behaviors. These individuals end up using the same energies, talents, and skills at home as they do at work.

One of the most effective ways to cause a separation between work and home is to force that separation through the use of "decompression routines". A decompression routine is a ritual which an individual establishes that signifies to himself and to everyone else that one part of his life is ending and he is now beginning the other part of his life. Decompression routines can consist of any ritual establishing that kind of separation--jogging after work, playing tennis, stopping for a beer, taking a hot bath, simply turning off the car and staring into space for 10 minutes before entering the house, etc. Decompression routines can be successfully done in the morning as well as in the evening. More important than when they are done is the fact that they do occur and that they serve as a signal to that individual that one segment of the day is over, and now begins another.

One technique often used to deal with Burn-out is the explaining, sharing, and even forcing of work problems upon one's spouse. Catharsis, while it is a helpful technique, is not effective in such situations. Unless one's spouse does the same type of work as the individual, such a catharsis is extremely frustrating for it forces one to live through an unpleasant experience again with someone who is impotent to give constructive advice. Consequently, an individual ends up feeling more depressed after sharing such a problem because he has now relived the experience and still has no ideas as to how to cope with it. These attempts to share can also destroy the separation of work and home as it brings the problems of one to the other.

Instead of taking such problems to one's spouse, it is more effective to establish for oneself a social/professional support group. A social/professional support group offers the opportunity for people to talk about themselves, their feelings, and their hassles. While gaining constructive feedback and criticism, empathy and humor are key ingredients to such a group.

A social/professional support group must meet three criteria. First, the members of the group must all be doing similar kinds of work. This assures that all group members will understand and empathize with the problems and experiences being shared. Second, members of the group must not be competitive with each other. Such groups must have an atmosphere of trust and openness. If competition or rivalry exist within the group, trust and openness will not. Third, such a group must offer constructive criticism and feedback to members and not allow them simply to complain. Without constructive criticisms such groups deteriorate into gripe sessions. Gripe sessions are perhaps the most destructive thing that can be done to cope with Staff Burn-out. If all that is done is complain during such a session, members leave the group feeling worse than when they entered.

Physical aspects of many problems are closely tied to mental aspects. So it is with Burn-out. An increase in physical performance will have positive effect upon a person's mental performance. Individuals should be encouraged to develop physical activities which allow them to "go crazy" be it running, tennis, skiing, shaking the rugs, cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, etc. Individuals must be able to totally lose themselves in an activity (we often need to lose our minds in order to keep them!). This allows one to deal with each small, insignificant problem which occurred during the day. It would be impossible for the individual to go back and correct each one at a time, but vigorous physical activity allows him to deal with all such occurrences at once. Secondly, it is encouraged that individuals do such "crazy" behavior until they are exhausted. Exhaustion accomplishes the same thing as a vacation for it allows one to unwind, guarantees a good night's sleep and coming back to work refreshed. Eventually an individual may not have to use such drastic means to cope with stress and more subtle forms of exertion, such as a walk around the block, a bike ride with the kids, or puttering in the garden can suffice.

Attention to good physical condition should occur at work as well. Employees should be encouraged to go outside during the noon hour, eat lunch and not skip it, get the proper exercise, cut down smoking, and perhaps even try water instead of coffee.

Individuals who burn out most rapidly are those who, while saying "I can't", are nonetheless forced to continue to deal with other people. "Time out" systems are a way of remedying this dilemma. Such a system involves having workers feel free to ask for a "time out", which might include a staff retreat day, a staff mental health day, devoting one day a week to paper work, a team rotation of job duties, a leave of absence, a temporary transfer of responsibilities, or any other situation in which they are free to take time off from their normal duties. It is crucial in any such system that an individual know his normal duties will be taken care of during the time out. Without such assurances, individuals can feel guilty for taking a time out because clients are not receiving services or because they will receive the indignant feelings of others when they return to work. Administrators have traditionally been leery of time out systems, fearing their abuse by employees. However, evidence shows that people do not abuse such systems. Simply knowing that this option is available is often as much benefit as actually taking the time out.

Finally, it is necessary in dealing with Staff Burn-out that individuals learn to relax. The key word in that statement is LEARN. Relaxation is a skill which must be acquired. Relaxation is not simply getting away from normal routine. Too often simply getting away involves one in another routine which is just as complicated and demanding as the work routine. Though it may be enjoyable, and a diversion, it is not relaxation in the true sense of the word. In our production oriented society, people feel guilty, or at least ill at ease, when they are not actively involved in accomplishing tasks or producing things. Consequently, even their attempts to get away from the grind often become world-wind productions that leave participants exhausted after attempting to concentrate too many experiences into a short period of time.

Relaxation, on the other hand, is the ability to do nothing and not feel guilty about it. Relaxation is the ability to feel good about just being, instead of having to feel good about accomplishing something or striving. The purpose of doing an activity when one is relaxing is to relax, not to achieve something, not to get it finished. Relaxation is perhaps trying a new activity, even though one realizes he may not be good at it. Being good is not the purpose. Simply doing is the purpose. Relaxation is an activity which is done to please the individual and not those around him. And finally, relaxation is something which, like any other skill, must be practiced. At least one-half hour a day should be devoted to practicing relaxation.

Conclusion

An unwillingness to take time to devote to oneself be it in relaxation, or in establishing a new set of work habits, or in changing one's life style, is perhaps the biggest obstacle in dealing with Staff Burn-out. Individuals in helping professions who work with other people tend to be "givers". These people generally feel good about themselves in direct proportion to the amount that they are able to give or produce for other people. It is imperative that helpers realize that unless they can put back in as well as give out, the result is an empty gas tank, a dead battery, or what has been called Staff Burn-out.